

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Islamic Junior High School is the first level of education that makes English a compulsory subject. As is known, English is one of the foreign languages required in Indonesian educational institutions. At a conference for teacher trainers, English was officially recognized as a foreign language in Indonesia in 1955. English was considered an important international language, as represented by the United States and the United Kingdom, which were the dominant global political powers at the time.¹

Islamic Junior High Schools are divided into two parts, Public Islamic Junior High Schools and Private Islamic Junior High Schools. The number of public Islamic Junior High Schools is usually less than private Islamic Junior High Schools. Both do not have much difference from each other. Public Islamic Junior High Schools are more favorable than Private Islamic Junior High Schools in terms of facilities as they have complete and adequate facilities to support teaching and learning activities.

However, not all private Islamic junior high schools have adequate facilities, only some private Islamic junior high schools have the resources needed for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, the school should be able to accommodate students by having computers, LCDs, and other technologies as Indonesian education is changing day by day.

During the pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (*Kemendikbud RI*) launched the “Merdeka Belajar” Curriculum. The concept of “Merdeka Belajar” is a new policy to improve national education.² The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for students to express themselves and their abilities in learning activities. Currently, all universities in Indonesia are involved in realizing the Merdeka Curriculum.³

¹ Subhan Zein and others, ‘English Language Education in Indonesia: A Review of Research (2011-2019)’, *Language Teaching*, 53.4 (2020), 491–523 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000208>>.

² Yuli Supriani, Asep Supriyadi, and Bambang Samsul Arifin, ‘Islamic Education in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum’, 6.2 (2022), 2780–87.

³ Rina Berliana, ‘Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum Learning: Study of High School Managements’, *Maktab: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Teknologi*, 1.3 (2022), 1037–47.

The Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, stated that there are two most important factors in education, namely freedom of learning and mobile teachers. Freedom of learning includes teachers and students being able to develop and learn independently or in groups. As an improvement from the 2013 curriculum, Nadiem Anwar Makarim modified and created the Merdeka Curriculum in 2019.⁴

Since the beginning of the curriculum until now, Indonesia has used various curriculum. Each curriculum was used for approximately ten years. This global pandemic has also affected the education sector until the last curriculum, especially the 2013 curriculum before COVID-19.⁵ As an effort to improve the education sector after COVID-19 the curriculum in Indonesia has also been updated with this Merdeka Curriculum. However, educational institutions in Indonesia have not fully adopted the independent curriculum. It is caused by inadequate school infrastructure that becomes a challenge.

Some schools in Kudus have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. These institutions, known as driving schools “*Sekolah Penggerak*” are equipped with the necessary infrastructure and human resources. Currently, there are several driving schools in Kudus.

The success of a country's education system can be used to measure its progress, but educational success is also the result of the curriculum used, which serves as a framework for designing, implementing, and assessing learning. The curriculum should also

⁴ Sofa Sari Miladiah, Nendi Sugandi, and Rita Sulastini, ‘Analisis Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Di Smp Bina Taruna Kabupaten Bandung’, *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education*, 9.1 (2023), 312–18 <<https://doi.org/10.58258/jime.v9i1.4589>>.

⁵ Ying Gao and others, ‘Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Terhadap Prestasi Siswa Pada Smp Negeri 1 Makassar’, *Aleph*, 87.1,2 (2023), 149–200

<<https://repositorio.ufsc.br/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/167638/341506.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y%0Ahttps://repositorio.ufsm.br/bitstream/handle/1/8314/LOEBLEIN%2C> LUCINEIA CARLA.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y%0Ahttps://antigo.mdr.gov.br/saneamento/proces>.

consider how best to meet students' learning needs. Therefore, the curriculum should be kept under review at all times.⁶

In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it has many obstacles. Especially in Private Islamic Junior High Schools, where the facilities may be less complete than in Public Islamic Junior High Schools because they receive facilities from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenag RI). While Private Islamic Junior High Schools are managed by the community or foundations.

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that the Merdeka Curriculum is important to implement at this time to increase students' interest and enthusiasm in the learning process. It hopes that by implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, students will be more interested in learning English and improve their speaking skills. Because the Merdeka Curriculum is new curriculum, so researcher want to know more deeply about the implementation of this Merdeka Curriculum in Kudus. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study entitled "The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Public and Private Islamic Junior High School".

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the research above, the writer formulates the research questions as follows:

1. How is the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Public and Private Islamic Junior High Schools?
2. What are the obstacles to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Public and Private Islamic Junior High Schools?
3. What are the solutions to overcome obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at Public and Private Islamic Junior High Schools?

⁶Ying Gao and others, 'Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Terhadap Prestasi Siswa Pada Smp Negeri 1 Makassar', *Aleph*, 87.1,2 (2023), 149–200

<<https://repositorio.ufsc.br/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/167638/341506.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y%0Ahttps://repositorio.ufsm.br/bitstream/handle/1/8314/LOEBLEIN%2C> LUCINEIA CARLA.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y%0Ahttps://antigo.mdr.gov.br/saneamento/proces>.

C. Research Objective

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To find out the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public and private Islamic Junior High Schools.
2. To find out the obstacles encountered while implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in both public and private Islamic junior high schools. (a study case at Islamic Junior High School in Kudus).
3. To provide solutions to problems found during the implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum.

D. Research Significances

The result of the research is expected to contribute for:

1. For the teacher

The findings of this study are expected to offer teachers an overview of how to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, it is a motivation for educators to improve their professionalism and gain experience in teaching using the Merdeka Curriculum. So that he can utilize it to improve his knowledge and skills in arranging teaching and learning activities.

2. For the other researcher

This research is designed to provide important information about the application of the independent curriculum and can be used as a reference for future research. This is intended to be a factor for other researchers to walk more carefully to do more valuable study. It might potentially be an experiment for the next researcher.

E. Organization of Thesis

The organization of the thesis describes how the writing process for the paper makes comprehension easier. A professional thesis is structured as follows.

1. Chapter I – Introduction

This chapter presents the research background, problem statement, purpose, research implications, and writing structure.

2. Chapter II – Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, theoretical underpinnings, theoretical descriptions, prior research, frameworks, and hypotheses are all described. Researchers additionally include their subject-

specific knowledge to uphold the study's validity and credibility. They come from respected linguists around the world.

3. Chapter III – Research Methodology

This chapter demonstrates how data can be included in the main body of the study. These sessions will cover study design, samples, data collecting, data equipment, and data analysis. This part will collect and evaluate a large amount of data required by researchers.

4. Chapter IV – Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents all of the data analysis results. The research question is addressed in this chapter. The researchers provided a commentary on the findings to help readers understand them better.

5. Chapter V – Conclusions and Recommendations

This Chapter presents the conclusion and suggestions. This is the end of the paper.

